

Iowa River Otter Trapping Regulations 2006-07



Regulations are in effect for trapping river otters in Iowa, including season dates, season quotas, bag limits, and trapping requirements. This pamphlet briefly describes Iowa's otter history, and details river otter trapping regulations, and what successful trappers must do after catching a river otter in Iowa.



RIVER OTTER HISTORY IN IOWA

*Nearly disappeared in the 1870s because of over exploitation and habitat deterioration.

*Restoration began in 1985 as part of a 3-way wildlife trade with Kentucky who purchased river otters from Louisiana. Additional river otters were purchased directly from Louisiana through private fund raising efforts.

*Over 350 river otters were released in Iowa.

*River otters were present in portions of all Iowa counties by the early 2000s.

* Because of an international treaty called the Convention in Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), the DNR is required to apply to the Scientific Authority of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to have a harvest season.

* Also, because of the CITES treaty, river otters caught during the open season are required to have CITES tags attached to the pelt of the animal.

•SEASON DATES & BAG LIMITS:

River otter trapping is permitted statewide in Iowa during the open river otter trapping season. **(In addition to general trapping regulations described in the 2006-07 Iowa Hunting and Trapping Regulations booklet, the following regulations also apply to river otter trapping.)**

•SEASON DATES:

The river otter season opens at 8:00 a.m. November 4, 2006 and closes January 31, 2007 or when the quota of 400 is reached. A statewide media blitz will

occur when we near the 400 quota. Any river otters trapped after the season closes, and after the 72 hour grace period, **MUST** be turned over to the DNR.

•BAG LIMITS:

River otters may be trapped STATEWIDE in Iowa. Total season bag limit is 2 river otters per licensed furharvester.

•BASIC REQUIREMENTS:

1) Except for landowners and their juvenile children trapping on their own property, anyone trapping river otters in Iowa is required to have a valid furharvester license and to have paid the habitat fee.

2) *Resident Furharvester License fee= \$21

*Non Resident Furharvester License=\$200.50

*Habitat Fee (ages 16 to 65) = \$8.50

3) The statewide quota is 400 otters plus any legally trapped otters, taken in the 72-hour grace period after the quota is reached.

•REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

1) Trappers must call a Conservation Officer within 24 hours of trapping a river otter.

Conservation Officer phone numbers can be found in the 2006-2007 Hunting & Trapping Regulations Booklet and on the (www.iowadnr.com) website.

2) The Conservation Officer will call the DNR's Harvest Reporting System to report the otter.

3) DNR will post daily the quota remaining on its website Hot Topics (www.iowadnr.com) and on the telephone river otter hot-line

(515-281-5918).

4) Once the quota is reached, trappers may keep any otter captured in the next 72 hours (grace period), not to exceed the 2 otter season limit.

5) Otters accidentally captured after the grace period, or over the 2 otter season limit **MUST** be turned over to DNR without penalty.

6) The website and hot-line will be updated daily to tell trappers when the season ends, when the grace period ends, and when otters **MUST** be turned over to the DNR.

7) Age & reproductive data collected from river otter carcasses is **CRITICAL** to the future management and harvest of river otters in Iowa. Trappers will need to tag their otter carcass, (a carcass tag will be provided) and arrangements need to be made for the DNR to retrieve river otter carcasses after the animal has been skinned.

•TAGGING REQUIREMENTS:

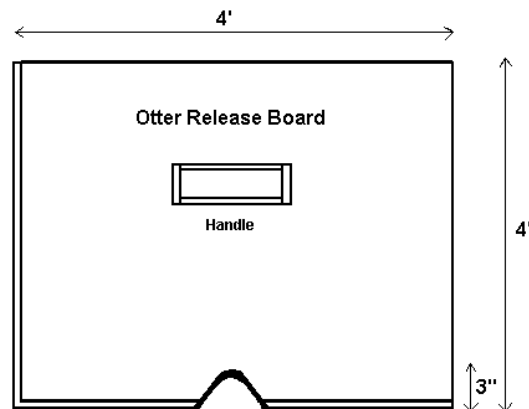
- 1) Trappers must meet with the Conservation Officer within 72 hours of reporting an otter to receive and attach a CITES tag on site.
- 2) CITES tags must be attached before the otter is skinned and must remain with the animal. CITES tags will be attached through the upper lip under the skin and through the eye opening or the reverse, through eyelid down through upper lip. If the trapper decides to freeze their river otter on the carcass before tagging, it is recommended that the trapper cut an opening from the eyelid to the upper lip, push a pencil through the opening to the upper lip, and let it freeze in place to facilitate attaching the CITES tag to the pelt of the animal.
- 3) Animals kept for taxidermy, hides, rugs, other display, or educational purposes must have the CITES tag retained with the pelt or mount at all times.
- 4) Breaking the seal of a CITES tag to place it on another river otter is subject to federal citation.
- 5) Information on date, location of harvest, and other important items will be collected at the time the otter is tagged. This information is needed to ensure appropriate harvests and to sustain the river otter population in Iowa.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Trappers who have reached their season bag limit are encouraged to implement river otter avoidance techniques while raccoon and beaver trapping. If you catch an otter in excess of your season bag limit, or after the season has closed, or the quota of 400 has been reached, and the animal is still alive, carefully release it without causing injury to yourself or the river otter. It is advisable to have two people help release a live river otter. River otters are very quick and have sharp teeth. Avoid being bitten by a river otter.

RELEASING AN OTTER

If the trap site will allow, the best and safest way to release an otter is to utilize a notched board as shown below. You can also use a heavy-duty dip net, but it may not be as easy. A catchpole to release an otter can be difficult to use without causing harm to the otter. It is important that the catchpole noose be around the otter's neck and not behind its front shoulders in order to avoid causing harm to the otter.

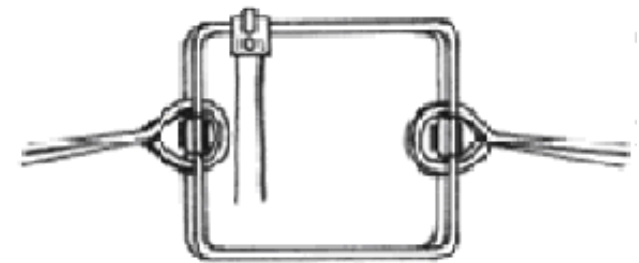


If you catch an otter in excess of your season bag limit, or after the season has closed, or the quota of 400 has been reached, and the otter is dead, you **MUST** turn over the dead otter to the Iowa DNR.

Reproductive and population age structure information is critical to the future of river otter management in Iowa. Without this data we will not be able to retain the harvest season or adjust the season as the otter population changes.

BEING A RESPONSIBLE, CONSCIENTIOUS FURHARVESTER IS GOOD WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT. IT IS CRITICAL THAT TRAPPERS POLICE THEIR OWN RANKS OR RIVER OTTER TRAPPING MAY NOT CONTINUE IN FUTURE YEARS.

Beaver trappers can reduce the catch of river otters in Conibear traps by off setting the trigger mechanism as shown in figure below. Many times the smaller more torpedo shaped otter can swim through the opening and not get captured while most of the larger sized beaver will be captured.



More information on the modification can be found at:

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/wildgame/330modi.pdf>